CSA News

The Creation Science Association for Mid-America

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in men" Psalm 118:8 *Volume 10(4) July/Aug, 1993*

IS CATASTROPHISM EXTINCT?

by: Marsha Williams

[Editor's Note: Marsha Williams is the second Geology student to utilize **CSA** meetings as a vehicle to help maintain sanity while working on her degree. Jim Anderson, a **CSA** regular, obtained his Masters in Geology. His thesis, some two inches thick, literally destroyed the prevailing geology of Kansas. He was screamed at by members of his masters review committee, but calmly prevailed. He received his degree, is a practicing geologist and presented his thesis at the Southwest Geologic Conference where it was voted #1 Student paper! Marsha's brief paper, reproduced below, received an "A" with her professor's written remark "Excellent Paper." Marsha spent a day in the **CSA library**, researching for the paper. Like her professor, we thought it was excellent, and requested her permission to publish it. The Scripture says to "Study to show yourselves approved," and to "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." Marsha and Jim have done just that. We are pleased that **CSA** was able to provide some help for them.]

ABSTRACT

In the early 1800's, virtually all geologists were catastrophists. The pendulum swung, and within a century, virtually all geologists were uniformitarians. Gradually, evidence mounted showing the importance of catastrophic events in the geologic record, and the pendulum began to oscillate back. It may well come to rest somewhere between the extremes, if scientists can shed their labels and look honestly at the evidence preserved for us in the archives of earth's crust.

The proverbial pendulum is swinging again. At one time, virtually all interpreters of geology were catastrophists. They believed that most, if not all, of the major geological formations were formed during a cataclysmic worldwide flood as described in the biblical account of Genesis that left the present geological strata as it's signature. Since this was to have taken place in the span of about one year, the earth was considered to be young, and daily geological processes were not considered significant in forming the stratigraphic record. Then, in the late eighteenth century, a Scottish farmer named James Hutton set the pendulum in motion. He is called the "Father of Geology" principally because he was the "father of uniformitarianism" to which most geologists today ascribe in some modified form. He proposed that, given enough time, geologic processes that are presently observed could account for all the geologic features of the earth. He believed that "the present is the key to the past," and considered catastrophic processes insignificant in forming the stratigraphic record. Thus began uniformitarianism, and the pendulum swung fairly rapidly and completely. His ideas were popularized by Charles Lyell who, in the mid nineteenth century, modified them to an extreme uniformitarianism, and became champion of the cause. Lyell asserted that not only were the geologic processes uniform; they also occurred at a uniform rate. By the early twentieth century, virtually all geologists were uniformitarians. Then the pendulum began to swing again.

In 1923, American geologist J. Harlen Bretz amused the scientific community by proposing that the vast area of the Pacific Northwest known as the "Channeled Scablands" was formed catastrophically. He believed that a great flood of water swept through the area, scouring off the topography, and cutting canyons into the basalt below. He submitted his theory to the scientific community, and predicted their response. According to researcher Steven Austin (1991), Bretz wrote: *"Catastrophism had virtually vanished from geologic thinking when Hutton's concept of 'The Present is Key to the Past' was accepted and uniformitarianism was born. Was not this debacle that had been deduced from the Channeled Scabland simply a return, a retreat to Catastrophism, to the dark ages of geology? It could not, it must not be tolerated."*

Bretz was correct: the scientific community was not ready to consider anything of a catastrophic nature. He was ridiculed and bitterly opposed, but he stuck to his theory, and after 40 years of presenting papers finally had managed to convince most of his colleagues. He was awarded the top medal of the Geological Society of America, and was sent a telegram from the International Association for Quaternary Research in the United States. It concluded: *"We are all catastrophists now."* (Ager, 1991)

Evidence was mounting that catastrophism had played a major role in geology. Such topics as mass extinctions in the fossil record, evidence of meteoric impact, advancing theories of plate tectonics and magnetic reversals, and the discovery of extensive prehistoric volcanism poured into scientific literature and pervaded scientific conferences. In the 1960's and 70's, a number of articles began to appear in professional journals challenging the traditional teaching of uniformitarianism. An article in the Journal of Geological Education (Heylmun, 1971) reviewed recent research and concluded: *"It is plainly evident that events have been neither uniform nor orderly through geologic time."*

In 1965 an emerging geologist at Columbia University, Stephen Jay Gould, published an article entitled "Is Uniformitarianism Necessary?" Lyell, he said, *"regarded the discrediting of catastrophist theory as prerequisite to the establishment of truly scientific procedure in geology."* He asserted that while this may have served it's purpose at the time, it is no longer necessary. He concluded that two separate theories have been lumped together under the one term "uniformitarianism", consisting of (1) constancy of the rate of geologic processes (substantive uniformitarianism) and (2) constancy of the natural laws governing those processes (methodological uniformitarianism). Substantive theory, he argued, has been proven incorrect, and methodological theory is now such an established part of scientific thought that we need no longer defend it. Thus, the word "uniformitarianism" is outmoded and *"best confined to the past history of geology."*

Gould's approach is clarified in his later book Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle, in which he despairs of the old uniformity/catastrophe dichotomy as *"an anachronistic or moralistic contrast imposed by whiggish histories of textbook cardboard."* As the name implies, he views the debate as one between time's arrow ("the intelligibility of distinct and irreversible events," typified by Judeo-Christian thought) and time's cycle ("the intelligibility of timeless order and lawlike structure," exemplified by Huttonian-Lyellian thought.) All other schools of thought have been a struggle to combine the two in various measures. While he subscribes to neither, he asserts that in principle, "We must have both."

His approach is typical of most modern geologists, who view the geologic record as a combination of evidence left behind by vast cataclysmic events and accumulation of unremarkable day to day

processes. College textbooks make claims that *"The principle of uniformity is basic and fundamental to all science... as a principle (it) does not preclude catastrophic events as important in geologic history... To make that distinction clear, the word actualism has been suggested as an alternative..."* (Peterson and Rigby, 1990 revised, p.14). Others prefer the term "episodicity" in referring to episodic sedimentation. Richard Dott proposed this term in his presidential address to the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists in 1982, stressing that episodicity is the rule, not the exception. He argued that " 'Catastrophic' has become popular recently because of its dramatic effect, but it should be purged from our vocabulary because it feeds the neo-catastrophist-creation cause." (quoted by Morris, 1985, p.ix)

This reluctance of most catastrophic geologists to be associated in any way with the catastrophic theory of modern creationists is typical. It is unfortunate, since it results in polarization of "camps" with little communication between, to the detriment of true science. It ignores that modern creationist theory has evolved dramatically from the 18th century simple catastrophism with which it is often associated by the ill-informed. The ranks of creationist researchers with advanced degrees has swollen rapidly, and much carefully documented and researched work has been done in geology, as well as in other sciences over the last thirty years. No longer is the entire geological strata presumed to have been deposited during one worldwide deluge, but by a series of catastrophic events which include a twofold global inundation and subsequent uplift of continents with resulting orogenies, volcanism, glaciation and plate tectonics. Day-to-day geologic processes are recognized in the strata between those marked by major catastrophe. Thus, while the pendulum swings from uniformity toward catastrophe in one camp, it swings from catastrophe toward a more gradualistic approach in the other.

Yet even the revisionists who espouse catastrophic interpretations of geologic phenomena ignore important research by creationists in such areas as formation of coal, rapid deposition and lithification of sedimentary rocks, erosion and cavitation, radiometric dating, fossil sequences and mass extinctions, causes of glaciation, implications of extraterrestrial impacts, etc. They are like sailors who have missed the boat for fear of the water. Even Gould, who carefully researches and praises the catastrophists of the past, many of whom were creationists, willfully remains ignorant of changing theory in the creationist camp. In his article "Unconnected Truths," he misleads his audience in typical fashion: *"Modern creationists have dogmatically preached an even more outmoded and discredited version of flood theory... They do no fieldwork to test their claims... and they will change not one jot or tittle of their preposterous theory."* A search of the past ten years of scientific periodicals in a university library revealed consistent onslaught through intimidation. But not one article could present a meaningful rebuttal of the research done by creationists in catastrophic processes in geology.

It would behoove all scientists to shed their labels and look squarely at the testimony of the earth's crust. The evidence is overwhelming: catastrophes do alter the earth in undeniably vast proportions. Between such cataclysms, the gentle forces of nature carve their autograph on the landscape with unrelenting consistency. When and if the pendulum slows and stops, it will come to rest somewhere between the extremes, as all pendulums eventually must do.

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Editor's Postscript:

Uniformitarian Geology was always Biblically and intellectually bankrupt. The rocks contain volumes of evidence of catastrophic activity. Uniformitarionism was accepted, not because of the evidence, but because of the "evidence" it purportedly gave against the Bible. Early "flood geology" had its problems too. Many of its proponents ascribed all rock deposits to the activity of the Noahic flood. One clue that this was wrong should have been that it ignored clear Biblical evidence. The Bible clearly describes **two "worldwide floods"** (One during creation week[1], one during the time of Noah[2]), **two continental uplifts,** (one during Creation Week[3], one in Noah's time[4]), **and one division of the earth**[5]. As Marsh intimated, most Biblical Geologists today believe that the rocks reflect **all three of these events, plus "residual catastrophism,"** i.e., significant, but declining catastrophes for hundreds of years, in the aftermath of the flood. The evidence that the Earth's rock formations not only can fit into this short time frame, but cannot possibly be explained by long periods of time is incontrovertible. We will be dealing with this during the meetings in June, July and August, 1993. Tapes of these meetings and reprints of this and other **CSA** articles are, or will be, available. Write or call.

[1] *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the <u>waters</u>.* Genesis 1:2 Note that no dry land appeared until day three (see below).

[2] *And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from und er heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.* Genesis 6:17

[3] *And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.* Genesis1:9 The only way to get the waters to stay in their assigned places was to raise the land and lower the seas, the first continental "upl ift."

[4] *Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a <u>bound</u> that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.* Psalm 104:6-9 This is clearly a reference to the Flood and the covenant with Noah to never destroy the earth again by water. The "bound" had to be an uplifting of new post-flood continents and new ocean b asins.

[5] And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. Genesis10:25 See also 1Chron 1:19. Strong words 6388 (river/stream), 6389 (earthquake), 6385 (to split). Other languages have the same root which invariably means water or sea, e.g., pelagic. Thus the division referred to in Gen 10:25, et al probably refers to a division involving water, i.e. the division of the continents, not the Tower of Babel.

Book of the Month:

Ape Men: Science or Myth?

An Origins Resource Paper

For Students and Others Who Want to Know
What the Textbook Didn't Tell them

by: David W. Brown

The first of an exciting new series of technical papers for students, teachers and others who want a quick overview of a subject, but do not have time to study a 200 page book. **CSA Origins Resource Papers** are 20 to 30 pages long, and are designed to be stocked by teachers, pastors, youth leaders, creation speakers, etc., to help fill the need of students assigned to write a paper, or others who have questions on a specific topic.

Not a "tract," these papers are thorough, with illustrations, quotes, references, bibliography, and suggested further reading list. Students are given permission to copy illustrations for research papers. Every attempt has been made to make these thorough and accurate. "Ape Men" covers all major fossil discoveries purported to offer evidence for human evolution from lower primates.

Regular price: $2.50 (plus postage) Special July/August, 1993: $2.50 (postage paid) 10 for $20, 30 for $50, 100 for $150

Audio/Video* Tape of the Month:

What is Science and How Does It Apply To Discussions of Origins?

by: Tom Willis

I believe it was Descartes who said, "If you would speak with me, define your terms." Regardless of who said it, it is profoundly relevant. Countless discussions of origins, and what should be taught in the "science" classroom proceed apace with no real common understanding of the key terms: "Creation, Evolution, and Science. There are at least as many definitions of science around as there are textbooks. Some claim that science is repeatable, but teach about the big bang and the first fish in science class. I have read that it is falsifyable, but if it can be falsified, why bother to teach it is science? In my entire life, I have never read a useful definition of science, outside of Webster's 1925 unabridged. Yet, without a definition, how do we know what to teach in the "science" class?

Special: July/August, 1993 Price: Audio: $4.00, VHS Video:* $12.00 (includes postage) *Note: The videos are **home video, not** studio quality.

Creation Safari Report

CSA Safaris are fantastic family outings. Good recreation, fellowship, educational, God-honoring, and Low Cost (actually no cost except where there is a charge by the enterprise we are visiting, and, of course, when you decide to contribute to **CSA**).

Safaris Coming Up Soon

June 11(18) 8:00PM - **Astronomy Safari**. Emphasis on Planets: Jupiter & Mars. Meet at The Berry Patch, 1/4 mile south of 223rd and State Line Rd.. Includes seminar on the stars: scientific and Biblical importance. (Date in parentheses is weather alternate) Call (816) 658-3610 for more information.

June 26, **Lakewood Fossil Hunt/Coal Exploration**. An exciting day-trip in the KC area. Good recreation, good education.

July 9 (16) 8:30PM - **Astronomy Safari**. Emphasis on Planets: Saturn.

July 10 - **KU Natural History Museum**. One of the most popular outings. An exciting tour of a typical museum, the sole purpose of which seems to be to sell evolution to its patrons. Bob Farwell does a marvelous job of presenting the "evidence" in a different light.

August 11 After 10:00PM - **Astronomy Safari**. Emphasis on Perseids Meteor Shower. See June 11 for description.

August 13 (20), 8:00PM - **Astronomy Safari**. Emphasis on Planets: Saturn. See June 11 for description.

August 14th, **Kansas City Zoo**. Why not take your family to the zoo and honor the creator instead of just looking at unhappy animals and reading evolution sales pitches.

September 10(17), 8:00PM **Astronomy**. See June 11 for description.

September 25 **KATY Trail Biking Safari** - Bicycle trip along 12 miles of Mo. River bluffs. Great family outing, geology re-examined. Kid trailers, etc. can be rented.

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See the March/April issue of **CSA News**, or call **CSA** at (816) 618-3610 (toll free from KC) Or write **CSA** at 22509 State Line Rd, Cleveland, MO 64734. In either case ask for the **Special Safari Details Edition of CSA News**

CSA Membership

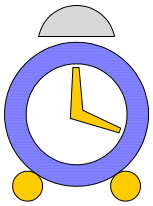
Few of CSA's activities pay for themselves. Most of the expenses of the newsletter (which now goes to over 5000 people), Lending Library, and other services we provide are financed by contributions and membership fees of folks like you who believe in our work. CSA has accepted the challenge of providing education in creation principles and Christian growth to everyone we are enabled to reach. Your partnership in CSA makes this mission attainable.

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Your investment of $17 for a full membership, or $5.00 for an Associate or $100.00 for a Sustaining membership, multiplied by the gifts and prayers of others, will insure that more and more people will come to a knowledge of the truth and the freedom which it brings.

CSA Meeting Tuesday, July 6, 1993

The Basic Session



The Age of the Earth: The Longest Myth - Part II

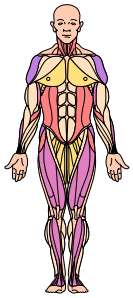
Geologic "Clocks"

by: Tom Willis

In Part I we examined Biblical, historical and scientific evidence for a young earth. In this session we will begin to examine "evidence" that persuades people the earth is not young, but old: rock deposition, lithification, erosion, formation of exotic and large scale phenomena like caves, Niagara Falls, Canyons, coal, oil, etc. Stories about these "evidences" for an old earth have persuaded far more people than "Carbon Dating," and other so-called "scientific dating" methods.

The Advanced Session

Evolution vs Science in Biology:



Functional Proteins: Chaos or Logos

A Video From the International Conference on Creation

by: David A. Kaufmann

Given a living cell with a favorable chemical environment (open system), sunlight and nutrients (available energy), the DNA genetic code (directing program) and a set of coordinated (not random) translating molecules (conversion mechanisms), living cells use this unique, activated DNA informational program to make proteins continuously which, in sequence, regulate other cell activities, growth and even the replication of DNA in reproduction. As anyone can see, it all "just happened," ... or did it? An in depth look at evolutionary "logic."

Quotable Quote

The gradual change of fossil species has never been part of the evidence for evolution. In the chapters on the fossil record in the Origin of Species Darwin showed that the record was useless for testing between evolution and special creation because it has great gaps in it. The same argument still applies.

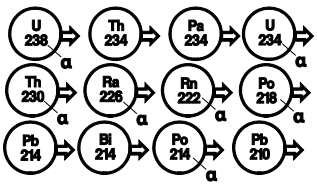
Mark Ridley, "Who Doubts Evolution?" *New Scientist 25 (June 1981): 831*

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CSA Meeting Tuesday, August 3, 1993

The Basic Session



The Age of the Earth:

The Longest Myth - Part III

Radiometric Dating, Light From Distant Stars and Other *"Very Scientific"* Clocks

by: Tom Willis

Ask someone "What is the most compelling evidence for an old earth?" At least half will say "Carbon dating," and most others will say "Light from distant stars." Ask them "What do you know about carbon dating ?" or "How do you know how far the distant stars are?" and not one in a thousand can even begin to answer. Esau showed that he despised his birthright by trading it for a bowl of soup. The birthright of every human being is to spend eternity with Jesus. Millions seem to despise their birthright, for they will trade it for something worth less than a bowl of soup, radiometric dating and light from distant stars.

The Advanced Session

Evolution vs Science in Biology:

Human Language Demands a Creator



A Video From the International Conference on Creation

by: Wm. M. Curtis

A topic many people choose to ignore, or simply never think about: Where did language come from? This is not a trivial question. Language is not simple by any means. Nor is there any evidence language the result of monkeys grunting. Human beings have language. Where they please, they invent new ones. They invent machines with languages (computers and robots) and invent their languages. Where did this all come from? Is it the product of chaotic chance?

Meeting Location:

Westbrooke Church

9898 West 95th, Overland Park, KS

Refreshments: 6:15PM - Meeting: 7:00PM

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